Department of Community Services and Development

2009 ARRA EITC INITIATIVE: Request for Proposal

(NOTE: NO AWARDS CAN BE MADE OR FUNDS RELEASED UNTIL CSD HAS RECEIVED LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AUTHORITY TO EXPEND CSBG ARRA FUNDING.)

Announcement

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to increase utilization of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by low income Californians. We encourage CSBG funded entities to submit proposals which promote increased awareness of the EITC and expand efforts to assist low income Californians to apply for EITC.

Background

The California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) has received CSBG American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. The Recovery Act mandates that States reserve1% of the funds to be used for "benefits enrollment coordination activities". CSD will use the funds to focus its efforts on the implementation of a statewide program to increase utilization of EITC to assist both California families struggling to survive in the midst of a severe recession and California communities that will benefit from the infusion of EITC dollars into the local economy.

Californians leave an estimated $10 billion of unclaimed EITC money "on the table". This money translates into an average EITC benefit of $2,100 for families with children and a maximum credit of $4,824. Although there are many reasons why families do not file for the EITC, primary among them is lack of awareness of the EITC and uncertainty as to how to apply for EITC benefits. To address these issues, CSD in partnership with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is issuing a competitive RFP to fund CSBG eligible entities to provide services and activities that will result in an increase of the number of low income Californians who apply for and receive EITC refunds.

As part of this initiative, CSD will partner with the First Lady's Office to promote awareness of EITC. CSD also plans to host an educational EITC conference for all California EITC providers to promote and encourage best practices and provide updated EITC information.

CSD conducted a preliminary survey in April 2009 which identified that almost half of CSBG grantees already participate in EITC awareness and intake activities and helped Californians to apply for $21 million in EITC refunds. CSD's goal for with this initiative is to provide additional resources to help CSD's network expand its already significant efforts to assist Californians in applying for the EITC.

Proposed Timeline

Below is the proposed timeline for this proposal

RFP Released	July 20, 2009
Deadline Date to Submit RFP	August 20, 2009
Proposed Review Period	August 24 - September 15, 2009
*Proposed Award Date	September 18, 2009
*Proposed Contract Term	October 1, 2009 – Sept. 30, 2010

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Initiative Summary

Proposals will be evaluated based on adherence to proposal instructions and completeness, clarity, and persuasiveness of responses to the proposal narrative outlined in the sections below. CSD and CDSS are looking for projects that are creative, promise specific outcomes, utilize community resources and collaborations, and show sustainability for continuation beyond the life of the project term.

Eligible Entities

Only CSBG eligible entities are eligible to apply. Proposals may include provision for subcontracts.

Required and Desirable Initiative Activities

Grant applications must meet the following requirements:
- Increase awareness of the EITC among eligible populations, using proven outreach strategies (directly by applicant agency or through partnership)
- Provide tax preparation assistance to low income Californians applying for the EITC (directly by applicant agency or through partnership)
- Coordination with local CalWORKS program
- Significant participation in a local EITC coalition or concrete plan to develop such a coalition.(A local asset development coalition is permissible in place of an EITC coalition *IF* it can be demonstrated that EITC is or will become a significant focus of the asset development collaborative)

Desirable Initiative Activities:
- Integration with other asset development activities such as financial education, and establishment of savings accounts/ Individual Development Accounts (IDA's)
- Coordination with other efforts to increase low income Californians' utilization of local, state or federal benefits available to them
- Integration of EITC (and other benefit/asset development efforts) with other agency programs, rather than EITC existing simply as a "stand alone activity"

Award Amount

CSD proposes to fund 10 to 20 grants from $25,000 to $50,000. Contract period will be for 11 months from October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010.

Proposal Submission Information

All proposals must be received by CSD on August 20, 2009, by 5:00 p.m. Each proposal shall consist of one (1) original and three (3) copies. All copies must be three-hole punched.

Mail Delivery	In Person Delivery
ARRA EITC Initiative Department of Community Services and Development Post Office Box 1947 Sacramento, CA 95812-1947	ARRA EITC Initiative Department of Community Services and Development 700 North 10th Street Sacramento, CA 95811

Be sure to use the mail delivery address to ensure prompt delivery, if not submitting proposal in person.

Proposal Instructions

All proposals must adhere to the following instructions (Maximum 5 Points):

1. **Due Date:**
   Submit proposal and required documents by 5:00 P.M. on August 20, 2009.

2. **Cover Letter:**
   Submit a cover letter on official agency letterhead signed by the Executive Director (or authorized designee) and Board Chair. (A Board Resolution is not required at this time; it will be required for execution of a contract).

3. **Proposal format:**
   Submit proposal narratives formatted with one-inch margins, single-spaced and 8 ½ x11" paper. Font size should be no smaller than 12. The proposal must be no more than five (5) pages. See below for proposal narrative submission.

4. **Stack Order list:**
   Submit all documents according to the stack order list. *See below for stack order list.*

Proposal Narrative Submission (Maximum 5 pages)

The proposal narrative should include the following: (Not to exceed 5 pages):

1. **Proposal Summary– (Maximum 5 Points)**
   Describe briefly need, your agency's proposed program, and anticipated outcomes.

2. **Agency Capacity & Experience – (Maximum 15 Points)**
   a. Describe overall experience and expertise of agency in operating programs targeted to the low-income population. Include agency's programmatic and administrative/fiscal strengths. Include specific reference to agency's success in operating other CSD funded programs, and past or current compliance with CSD requirements.

   b. Describe history, experience and success of any previous or current EITC and other asset building activities as well as history, experience, and success of benefits enrollment activities.

3. **Need – (Maximum 15 Points)**
   Describe the need in your community for expanded EITC outreach and

EITC application assistance resources. Provide concrete evidence of underutilization of the EITC benefit. How does the EITC utilization rate in your area compare with that in other areas? Describe the identified need within specific population(s) or target groups, including specific linguistic, cultural, geographic or other identified barriers. How have you identified these needs?

4. **Program Goals and Program Design – (Maximum 25 Points)**
Describe your goals in concrete quantifiable terms.

Describe the specifics of your proposed project such as:
   a. What population is to be served?
   b. How will awareness and outreach activities be conducted and how will existing barriers to EITC utilization be addressed?
   c. Where and how will clients be helped to apply for EITC?
   d. Time frame for program services (i.e. year round or only part of year).
   e. How will staff and/or volunteers be recruited and sustained?
   f. Will EITC be integrated with other tax credit opportunities, asset development approaches, and other benefits enrollment programs? Explain how.
   g. Description of active existing or proposed EITC coalition (include written commitments) and your agency's role (asset development coalitions acceptable if EITC is or will become a key component). Include successes/experience of existing coalitions.
   h. Demonstrated coordination with CalWORKS program and local welfare department (including participation in local coalition).

5. **Outcomes and Sustainability – (Maximum 15 Points)**

   a. Describe project outcomes in terms of number of individual tax returns filed, total tax dollars claimed, number of tax assistance sites created or expanded, and number of volunteers recruited, etc.
   b. How will the EITC program continue after this grant has ended? How will you replace this funding or how will the activities made possible by this grant be absorbed by your agency or other groups?

6. **Budget -- (Maximum 10 Points) Not included in 5 page limitation**
Please complete the following budget forms: Enclose a budget narrative (maximum two pages) to explain your budget and budget support pages. Place the narrative before the Budget Summary.

   o CSD 902.S Budget Summary
   o CSD 902.1.1 Budget Support Personnel
   o CSD 902.1.2 Budget Support Non Personnel

7. Commitment Letters --(Maximum 10 Points)
Include "commitment" letters to substantiate participation in existing or proposed EITC/Asset Building Coalition. Please do not include any other support letters.

Summary Evaluation Points

Evaluation Summary	Maximum Points
Proposal Instructions	5
Proposal narrative	75
Budget	10
Commitment Letters	10

Total   100

Contact person

If you have any questions contact Helga Lemke at hlemke@csd.ca.gov, phone 916-341-4309, or Leslie Taylor at ltaylor@csd.ca.gov, phone 916-341-4284.

Proposal Stack Order list

See the attached stack order list to assemble all the documents for submission.

Attachments

ATTACHMENT I—Budget forms and instructions (902.S., 902.1.1, 902.1.2)

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APPLICATION STACK ORDER CHECKLIST

The application elements and attachments must be assembled in the order listed below. Failure to attach required documents and/or failure to provide appropriate signatures where applicable shall be cause for an application to be deemed non-responsive and be disqualified.

ATTACHMENTS AND STACK ORDER
Please check each box when completed.

- ❑ Signed Cover Letter
- ❑ Numbered Table of Contents
- ❑ Proposal Narrative (Limit 5 pages)
- ❑ Budget Narrative (Maximum 2 pages)
- ❑ Budget

COMMITMENT LETTERS
- ❑ Letters to substantiate participation in existing or proposed EITC/Asset Building Coalitions (Do not include any other support letters)